THE STATUS OF BRAND MANAGEMENT IN THE CORPORATION

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*Pembahasan tentang Manajemen Merek (*brand management*) telah mendapat perhatian secara luas, baik dari kalangan praktisi bisnis maupun para peneliti di berbagai perguruan tinggi. Paling tidak ada dua pemikiran yang mengemuka menyangkut pembahasan manajemen merek, yakni: bagaimana mengelola suatu merek dan bagaimana menggerakkan pasar yang didorong oleh merek. Berdasarkan kedua pemikiran tersebut, pembahasan selanjutnya adalah bagaimana menghubungkan antara manajemen merek dengan strategi-bisnis korporat .*

Berkaitan dengan hubungan antara merek dan strtegi-bisnis korporat, ada beberapa permasalahan mendasar di antaranya: (1) bagaimana merefleksikan prinsip-prinsip merek ke dalam keputusan di bidang di bidang pemasaran, (2) bagaimana menggunakan prinsip-prinsip merek tersebut sebagai basis untuk merumuskan alternatif strategi pemasaran dalam proses perencanaan, (3) bagaimana menyusun prinsip-prinsip merek yang mampu merespon perubahan lingkungan marketing. Berdasarkan pemikiran-pemikiran tentang manajemen merek, artikel ini mencoba untuk mengkaji hubungan antara strategi-bisnis korporat dengan manajemen merek,

Keywords: brand; communi-marketing; marketer; sales.

Introduction

The objective of this paper is to examine how brand management is related to business strategy, and to present the relationship between corporate strategy/ business types and brand management.

It has been a while since the issue of brand management has broadly attracted the attention of both business practitioners and academic researchers in Japan. Recently, several research papers and books related to brand management have been published (e.g. Aoki et al., 1997; Katahira, 1998). Introductory publications for marketing, such as *Knowledge of Marketing*, Tamura (1998), have also dealt with the topic of "Branding Strategy." Aaker's two "classic" publications (Aaker, 1991 & 1993) plus his lectures on brand management have been continuously influential in Japan. These can be regarded as the indication that the issue of brand management is now regarded by Japanese researchers as an emerging paradigm in the marketing management studies.

At the same time in actual Japanese business world, we hear of several companies launching in-company projects aiming at strengthening and creating brands. These phenomena together suggest that the brand management thoughts are beginning to be a managerial concept and, at the same time, a serious business concern in Japan in the late 1990's.

In the United States, the first formal text book in this field titled *Strategic Brand Management* was written by Keller (1998). Leading US business schools are said to have established courses on brand management. This may be regarded as the sign that the brand theory has begun to acquire "citizenship" in the university education system.

As the above mentioned movements rise in the real world, there exist various understandings among researchers concerning brand management and the concept of brand strategy. As examples, let me cite a few comments made by researchers in Aoki et al's (1997).

Kosuke Ogawa's *Why Brand Now?* defines brand management as "a long term image creation activity that gives advantages in favor of the company's own brands against competing brands."(P. 4) Kyoichi Ikeo's essay entitled "Brand Strategy and the Change in Consumer Society" stresses the necessity of adapting three roles of brand, namely, "means of discernment", "symbol of reliability", and "meaning", with the segments of the market. (P. 29) In *Only Brands Can Explain the Reality of Brands* by Junzo Ishii, products and brands are differentiated, and the importance of giving the products meanings and directions through branding (the framework of concept/target/positioning) is suggested. Mitsuo Wada's *Brand as a Customer-Client Interface* proposes the term "communi-marketing," and describes the long term continuous process of repeated product power leading to emotional value and conception value as a result of two-way communication, and describes this process as the main theme for today's marketing.

On the other hand Katahira (1998) deals with brands not simply as tools for marketing but from the standpoint of corporate organizations, and explains the goal of brand marketer as "owning jointly and realizing together with workers, concerned parties outside the company, and clients the dreams that the brand possesses, and spreading among these people the deep emotions and impressions arising from it".

The ways in which these brand researchers comprehend brands are not vastly different. The following are elements common to most; 1) brands are different from the physical products. Brand is value, meanings, and ideas attached to the products separate from their actual physical values; 2) the influences that these values, implications, and ideas have on clients as well as employees inside the companies determine the success of today's marketing; 3) management of these values, meanings, and ideas of brands is what composes the so-called brand management. The cited researchers commonly share these understandings.

On the other hand, I (Tanaka, 1997), based on the above mentioned understandings, have assumed a rather different standpoint, and have submitted issues concerning brand management in the general context of strategic marketing. Specifically, my standpoint is that marketing strategy should be determined based upon the values, meanings, and ideas of the brand as the criterion. (Aoki et al, 1997, PP. 115-132) This, for example, would be a way of making decisions by referring to the brand's core-promise when considering the 4P's of marketing mix.

According to the study on global brand management by Tanaka and colleagues (1998), these value/meaning standards (the whereabouts of a globally standardized statements regarding positioning) were held by all 13 global brand companies surveyed. A globally unified standard regarding user benefit was also held by 11 out of 13 companies, and 10 out of 13 similarly held standards for brand image management. In the interviews and document analysis carried out in the same study, it was shown that in most global companies, there exist verbally-specified statements regulating brand management, and there also exist "brand guardians" (brand officers, brand champions, brand overseers) who direct these statements to be globally protected. In other words, within companies possessing a global brand, there exists, implicitly, a way of thinking for the protection of the value of the brand, and as Katahira (1998) observed, the implicit knowledge of protecting and promoting brands exists within the organization, and is shared among organization members, especially among the top management personnel.1)

Although based on limited observation, the following points could be summarized at this stage.

Brand management is, after all, the process of executing day-to-day marketing decision making by reflecting "the brand principles"; namely brand's values, meanings, and ideas. Brand management begins by: (1) establishing principles of the brand, (2) verbalizing and documenting them, (3) diffusing them within the organization, (4) determining a management structure (such as appointing a person in charge) that will be reflected in the decision making of daily operations. These courses of actions maybe called as "brand-driven marketing management" (Tanaka, 1997). Needless to say, this differs in content from the traditional "trade mark management" function.

However, other than this, the essential problems concerning brand management are; (1) how to reflect as much as possible the principles of the brand on everyday marketing decision making and, at the same time, (2) how to use brand principles as the basis when selecting marketing strategy alternatives in the planning process, and, (3) how to have the brand principles "evolve" in response to the ever changing marketing environment.

In this regard, brand management is a quite "plain and steady" work, and a special organization or a unique management structure is not needed, only if there is a common understandings on brand in the organization. Rather, shared understanding for brand building is necessary, particularly the understandings of the top management, and also an accumulation of everyday brand-related marketing actions are needed to ultimately build strong brands (See Aoki and Tanaka's dialogue, 1998).

In one global beverage company, when determining the contents of its annual campaign, the basic concept of that brand is continuously referred to while decisions are made. The "secret" that has allowed this beverage to maintain a longtime competitive advantage is not so much its ingredients or manufacturing method as its brand concept (Tanaka et al, 1998).

As a theoretical problem, these questions should be further examined: How to unite this idea of brand-based marketing management with the problems which occur outside marketing decision making, and how to direct the business activities while matching them to brand principles. These are the issues that this essay hopes to explore in detail.

This problem is important, for example, when considering how to deal with factors such as "business types" that are already determined as given prior to brand-based marketing decision making. This shall be called the "externality" of brand management. Externality here refers to kinds of corporate actions having influence without direct internal chained connections with other corporate actions.

For example, from the standpoint of the value chain idea proposed by Porter (1985), to bring about competitive advantages (cost superiority, differentiation), the value chain within the company must be analyzed, and an efficient value chain needs to be realized. Such value action is divided into "Primary activities" and "Support activities (human resource management, etc.)." Primary activities can generally be subdivided into the following five categories; Inbound Logistics, Operations, Outbound Logistics, Marketing and Sales, and Service. Here, brand management is obviously a part of marketing and sales activities, and it is relatively independent from, for instance, inbound logistics, although the two are connected by value chain. In this kind of situation, the inbound logistics activities are the externality of brand management, and even if the marketing department aims for the creation of a high grade brand, the decision making of the purchasing department may aim for low cost procurement without paying attention to brand.

This document will hereunder examine "corporate strategy" and "business types" which are two "externalities" of brands. The task of carrying out brand management and the task of selecting the corporate strategies or types of business are usually different from each other within a company. The selection of what kind of corporate strategy and business type to apply is a task of the top management, and it is usually done relatively independent of marketing decision making concerning brands. However, the selected corporate strategy and business type influence brand strategy, and it can also be thought that brands may influence corporate strategy and business type.2) The following section will examine how to relate these externalities with brand management.

Corporate Strategy and the Status of Brands

According to Porter (1985), the strategies that a company may take to acquire competitive advantage can be roughly classified to the following three strategies; cost leadership, differentiation, and concentration. Cost leadership strategy aims at achieving a low cost reputation by determining the economic size of the industry, using original technologies, and acquiring advantageous raw materials. Differentiation is the strategy that makes the company become distinctive by following several dimensions that purchasers regard as being important. This can be brought by differentiating the product itself, distribution system, and marketing methods, and they must always demand price premium. Finally, concentration strategy is taking one of the former two strategies and optimizing it by concentrating on a narrow segment.

Porter's theory here is based on the assumption that normally, a company cannot simultaneously choose these multiple strategies. To achieve cost leadership and concentration strategy at the same time, limited situations such as; the competitor is in an awkward position; the cost is determined by a large market share; a big innovation is achieved promptly; are required, and Porter believes that even if these situations occur, simultaneity is normally only temporary.

Based on this Porter's assumption, that a company can only select one strategy at one time, let us consider the positions of brand management using the following matrix (the original ideas in this section were presented in "Brand Management Conference" held on November 22, 1997 at Japan Marketing Association in Tokyo).

Each position of the matrix on Table 1 signifies what kind of intention each company held in directing its characteristics and specialties, and how the company established competitive advantages. At the same time the positions indicate what kind of benefits the company can offer for their customers. This matrix is called as "Market Offerings Matrix" (MOM).

"Cost Marketers" are companies that establish competitive advantages with lower costs by rationalizing the production process, procuring low cost raw materials using procurement technologies and purchasing systems, using packaging technologies, and applying superior distribution systems. "Techno Marketers" are companies that carry out differentiation using the superiority of the products themselves, brought by advanced technologies. "Channel Marketers" are companies that establish competitive advantages with push power, by ruling the distribution using physical distribution securing power, power of establishing an original channel of distribution, business operation power, and channel network. Finally, "Brand Marketers" are companies that make high earning power possible by selling to the consumers their products at premium prices, by making the best use of the constructed brand franchise.

Cost Marketers and Channel Marketers both try to achieving a better position in the market by aiming at an economic size, by intending for higher sales share. Techno Marketers and Brand Marketers, rather than aiming at higher sales and shares, try to achieve higher profit by price premium.

On the other hand, Cost Marketers and Techno Marketers are, by means of investment, working on the advancement

Table 1. **Market Offering Matrix (MOM)**

	Internal Orientation	**External Orientation**
Profit-oriented	Techno Marketer	Brand Marketer
Volume-oriented	Cost Marketer	Channel Marketer

of organizational structure to increase substantiality of in-house resources. Channel Marketers and Brand Marketers are, on the contrary, making large investments by establishing relationships with business partners and customers, and by doing so they are aiming at making the relationships outside the company more substantial.

Companies attempt to establish competitive superiority by fulfilling one of the positions indicated on this matrix. Moreover, companies are not limiting themselves to one position only. They try to strengthen their positions in the competition by moving from one position to another, seeking for advanced superiority.

For example, let us look at companies like Nike as a model. (Table 2) Nike possessed an operation plan originally plotted by Phil Nite. The idea was to produce high quality sports shoes at cheaper costs in Japan. In this stage, it could be said that Nite was, so to speak, aiming at Cost Marketing. In fact, at that time Nite was commissioning Onitsuka (present Asics) to produce sports shoes. Later, Nike began producing hi-tech athletic shoes in meeting the athlete's needs, such as shoes with waffle shaped soles. At this stage it is thought that Nike strengthened its aim for Techno Marketing. Moreover, Nike did not simply remain as a sports shoes mass production company, but strengthened its brand strategy by having top athletes as their endorsers, as we see today. (This is said to be the strategy already adopted by Adidas.) (Hartley, 1992). Finally at this stage, Nike reached the position of a Brand Marketer.

Let us look at another example with this matrix to see the locus of strategy shift. (Table 3)

Ryouhin Keikaku Inc. led Mujirushi Ryouhin (literally it means "non-branded good products". Hereafter, this will be called "Muji" in this paper), originally developed as a private brand of the Saison Group, to great success, and made it a big, independent brand group. According to the "Mujirushi Ryouhin" case of Keio Business School, the Muji brand started in 1980, and the sales that estimated at that time (1983) 5.5 billion yen was enlarged by 1993 to 30.8 billion yen.

When this enlargement is understood by applying it to the above matrix, the description will be as follows. As the advertising slogan of the Muji brand when it started in the early 80's was "There's a reason for the low price," the company encouraged lowering the price not just by simplifying the wrapping but from the three viewpoints of material, process, and

Table 2. **Strategic Shift of Nike**

Techno Marketer ❑	Brand Marketer
❑ Cost Marketer	Channel Marketer

Table 3. **Strategic Shift of Muji (Mujirushi Ryouhin)**

Techno Marketer	Brand Marketer
Cost Marketer ❑	❑ Channel Marketer

packaging through the trade off of function and price. At this point, Muji was obviously functioning as a Cost Marketer.

In 1983, three years after it started sales, Muji opened independent shops and in-shops of department stores, aiming at increasing distribution power. This movement still continues today, and now Muji is completely out of the position as a private brand of the Saison Group, and has its own distribution outlets (large size, urban and suburban stores.) At this stage the company is moving towards a Channel Marketer.

In 1989, Muji became independent of Seiyu's (Saison Group) business division, and made a fresh start as Ryouhin Keikaku Inc. In the process of development, the brand repeatedly confirmed its original concept and now is a matured, large brand (and at the same time a retail outlet) covering food products, domestic products, and daily sundries. It possesses a brand image that their products are not simply high quality goods at low prices, but it includes meaning and ideas based on the theme of nature, touching, and environment. This brand value leads to differentiation and the brand is now at the stage of accumulating great profit. At this stage, Muji has matured as a Brand Marketer.

As these examples reveal, the market offering strategy matrix is not only used to explain how a strategy of a company shifted. It helps to understand the process of the company establishing brands, and conquering the market not only by technology but by strategies using brands as the basis.

This Market Offerings Matrix (MOM) is used to describe the historical development, but it also takes a brand group of a single company and places each brand on these four categories as a portfolio, and can be used as that company's brand portfolio. For example, one brand is a Cost Marketer for its competitive advantages of cost, while another brand is a Channel Marketer for being a brand directed for a certain channel, and another brand group may construct marketing strategy as a Brand Marketer, utilizing its brand power. Thus, this MOM portfolio can be used to determine the positioning of each brand.

One implication that can be drawn from using this diagram is that marketers do not necessarily have to use a brand-based marketing strategy. Specifically, in an industry where cost is the only competitive priority, for example, it is possible that marketing strategies can be planned based mainly on cost advantage. Also, using its operation power as a weapon, a brand may establish its position as a Channel Marketer. However, this MOM tells us that acquiring competitive advantage by constructing brand power is one strong alternative for marketers to take. The diagram shows that taking the path leading to a Brand Marketer is the jump from an ordinary Cost Marketer, and is the way to become a profit-aiming-marketer)

Business Types and Brand Strategy

The main problem in discussing brand strategy is whether that strategy theory will have universality and validity for any operation type, product type, and type of business. Business types will have an impact on brand strategy set up process as an "externality." Certainly, it is skeptical, intuitively thinking, whether a brand strategy appropriate for perfumes would apply to hamburger shops.

In order to discover a strategy type for global brands, Tanaka and his colleagues (1998) attempted discriminant analysis using the two categories of daily necessities and not daily necessities as dependent variables. They hypothesized that strategy types would differ for these categories, but their hypothesis was not supported. This result may be a sign that the every day product types that we think of do not necessarily check with brand strategy types, but if so, what kind of business type category should we consider for determining brand strategy types?

Here, let us submit the following brand strategy type, based on the global brand interview survey results carried out by Tanaka et al (1998).

One is the so called FMCG (Fast Moving Consumer Goods), a package type product group. Let us call these a "Package-Type" brand strategy. Package goods handled in General Merchandizing Stores as food products and toiletry, domestic

Table 4. **Business Types and Brand Strategy**

Brand Type	**Package Type**	**Component Type**	**Customer Interface Type**
Characteristics of brand and representative product category	• Free selection by consumers through comparison with competing products • Distribution of products through independent firms • Food products, toiletry	• Capital goods that are not directly purchased by consumers • Industrial goods, business goods	• Products that need human services • Airlines, fast food, hotels
Strategic theme for	• Emotional values of brand and differentiation • Direct conveyance of value through communication	• Industrial brand= penetration of corporate strategy principles • Giving directions to business related persons • Understanding of stake holders	• Realization of internal marketing • Increase of customer satisfaction by communication
Major targets	• End consumers • Distribution related personnel	• Purchasing customers • Distribution related personnel • End consumers • Society, public	• Purchasing customers • Employees

medicines, domestic goods, and home appliances fall under this grouping.

The characteristic of this package-type brand is that consumers are in a situation where they can freely compare products and select for themselves the ones that fit their purpose the best, out of a series of competing products. In this regard brands belonging to the package type have a clearly different brand quality from other enterprise types. In the package type, since products are selected freely by consumers themselves, a plan that would help the products distribute on its own would be required. That is done by mass media advertising and over-the-counter promotion, but the important thing is that such communication will have to work in a way to give those package products meanings and feelings. In other words, since the selection of brands is solely up to the consumer's free will, marketing strategies must be designed so that the memories and stimulation of that brand would function as an advantage for the selection of that brand.(to increase selectability). This is the main strategic concern of the package type brand strategy.

In the management of package type brands, it is of course advantageous to have functional superiority of the products, but like the cola beverage categories, most of the times it is difficult to establish functional superiority in this field. For this reason, giving the brand an emotional values as its meaning is an important managerial concern. An approach is needed that would push the way of brand's positioning, value, and meaning through the mentality of the consumers to make it advantageous for purchasing. The brand value established in this manner is capable of being effective for a long time. One can easily understand this by picturing the case of long seller brands such as Marlboro.

The communication target of the packaging type brand is, needless to say, end users who are the end consumers, and distribution-related persons would be included in the secondary target to obtain the cooperation of distribution.

Next, let us ponder on the "ingredient" type brand group. Ingredient type is estimated for industrial goods (capital goods), and itself is a product that is not directly purchased by end users. (At times, business goods may also be included.) In this product field, brands are usually considered as being less important than consumer goods, and spec or price is deemed to be a more important aspect than brand. The prices are high, and a group oriented decision making is needed to decide on purchasing. In making purchasing decision, their functions are often closely inspected by experts. Also, a direct approach to customers by means of sales personnels is mandatory.

The central theme of brand strategy for such "Ingredient type" is to express the credo of the "business strategy" of product development and production by the brand, and as a result, to carry out environment creation for a smooth business operation. That is to say, determining what kind of corporate mission to apply in running the enterprise, and to have all the interested parties from direct purchasers to end users understand such mission are necessary in brand strategy. The so-called CI (corporate identity) is in this sense very important.

For example Intel is expressing it's micro processor by the well-known "intel inside" campaign. This has the purpose of making well-known to parties concerned the fact that the microprocessor is the core of the computer and that Intel is concentrating, in development and production, on micro processors with the highest performance.

The focus of brand management in this Ingredient type is determining what kind of principles/ideas/meanings to associate the brand with, communicating that ideology, and deciding which is the most advantageous goal setting for business operation.

In this sense, simply aiming at "a company useful to the society" is not an appropriate brand strategy. For example, *Xerox*, which calls itself "The Document Company" in its own slogan, is not just expressing that it is more than just a company of copy machines. This is because raising the efficiency of office documentation is the mission of *Xerox*, and it is important to give the brand strategy= marketing strategy of the company its direction, and to thoroughly notify the strategy to customers and sales net/ development personnel.

In the Ingredient type brand strategy, the targets are direct customers, distribution, end users (who finally use the products), and society/government/general public. The scope of the target is selected from an appropriate range to make the business operations smooth.

The third enterprise=brand strategy type is, "Customer Interface" type. In this type, enterprises such as simple service oriented enterprises and companies selling products like automobiles, and other business sectors that stress on after follow services are included. Airline business, fast food, and hotels are examples of this type. The characteristic of this enterprise type is that some kind of human interface (such as a sales counter) is required.

For this enterprise type, it is not enough to simply shape the memories and attitudes of consumers to be advantageous to purchasing. Human service exists there, and a brand management that includes the better environment creation of employees and service counters is necessary. The brand strategy theme for this "Customer Interface type" is to raise the degree of satisfaction through internal marketing and communication. Based on this assumption, Paul Schrage, a former marketing director for *McDonald's*, says that the *McDonald's* brand consists of everything that the customers feel, smell, touch, taste, hear, and see. (Tanaka et al, 1998) In other words, the brand penetrating through everything that customers feel with their five senses is what this Customer Interface type requires. No matter how hard one tries to improve the "brand image" by advertising, one cannot cover up the bad services at the stores with just images. Everything from advertisement to the way customers are treated at the stores must correspond to brand principles. *Toyota* has made the Lexus brand successful in the US, but together with the high quality of the cars, one cannot deny the important role of outstanding dealers providing excellent services.

The focus of brand management in the Customer Interface type is managing communication to improve the quality of services provided to the customers. This is because customers cannot always objectively evaluate the quality of the services they receive. For example, *McDonald's* stresses the importance of a smile in dealing with customers, but this communication with smiles is only effective because this basic principles of *McDonald's*, namely to deal with customers with smiles, is communicated in advance to the customers in different forms.

The target stratum of Customer Interface type brand communication is first the customer, and at the same time the employees. It is necessary to have information input to customers so that they can perceive the quality of the service higher, and at the same time, activities are necessary to have meanings of the brand penetrate to the employees through advertising and inner communication.

Conclusion

In this essay, we have examined the relationship between brands and corporate activities that shall be called the "externality" of brand management. The intent here was to make clear how to take into consideration corporate strategies and business type that has an "external" influence to brand management.

In corporate management, we examined four strategy types, which were; Cost Marketers where companies specialize in low costs, Channel Marketers where companies use channel control as a weapon, Techno Marketers where companies have a technological competitive advantages, and Brand Marketers where companies aim at high profit based on premium brand power. We have showed that Brand Marketers is one strategic alternative that a company may choose to apply. At the same time, we have indicated that Brand Marketing is one course that corporate strategies should aim.

Next, brand strategy for each business type was proposed. Business type was divided into the following three types; (1) Package type, (2) Ingredient type, (3) Customer Interface type, and we examined how the theme of brand management strategy and managerial focus differed for each type. Based on this, we have also observed the different targets for establishing the brands for each type.

As indicated at the beginning, there are two ways of thinking in the brand theory, namely, "managing the brand itself" and "managing the market driven by the brands." This essay based its contents on the latter way of thinking, and further attempted to examine the relationship between the market and "external" corporate strategy factors. This may be thought of as an attempt to magnify and amend the ideas of "strategic marketing" (directing the activities of the company through market response) from the brand point of view.

It is still important to give attention to brands, not just from the point of view of the situations facing Japanese companies today. It is necessary to critically reorganize marketing management theories itself from the standpoint of brands, and this essay was written on this line.

Notes

1. The indication that the idea of brands can be related to the "implicit knowledge" (Nonaka 1990) was reached by a personal communication with Dr. Akutsu (University of California at Berkley).
2. For example, let us consider the situation such as the merger of Mercedes Benz and Chrysler publicized in May 1998. Decisions such as this can be thought to have been reached by pure administration merits (such as economical size), separate from brands. However, after the merger of the two companies, it has been said that to protect brands, the product line (dealer) would be separated. Specifically, although merger decision making and brand decision making are not directly "transaction" matters in the company, their results bring about mutual influence. Such merger and corporate actions such as M&A are also externality for the brand.
3. This diagram is a theoretical hypothesis and needs to be tested empirically in the future. It is also necessary to check whether indexes such as profitability and growth ratio would differ for each market type.

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